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MESSIANIC PROPHECY.

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In approaching the subject of Messianic prophecy, there are two premises which we may rightfully assume: first, the actual Messianic manifestation; secondly, the unity of the source of the revelation through Christ and preceding revelations.

This narrows the question to the relation between the truth revealed in Christ and the truth revealed before Him.

The unity of a common divine origin betokens a relation, and the fulfillment betokens the character of the revelation.

It is necessary to emphasize the standpoint of fulfillment, since it was not the prophecy which determined Christ, but Christ who determined the prophecy. Yet again, to estimate aright the full bearing which the revelation of Christ sustained to the past, we must attempt to reach a comprehensive view of the relation of God to Israel in the past and the manifold character of the revelation made to them through all their national institutions, through the priesthood, the kingly line, the prophetic order, through all the vicissitudes of their history, through sign and symbol, through all expressions and figures betokening divine relationship and divine regard. It is only as we appreciate the constant and varied modes of divine relationship under the Old Covenant, that we are able to appreciate the force of the Messianic manifestation as the fulfillment of the Old.

It was the Christ who fulfilled the law and the prophets, not the law and the prophets who produced Christ.

Christ in Himself is an independent revelation from God, and in the character of the revelation itself is found the material which links it with the Old. Thence the New attests the Old, revealing its purpose, accrediting its truth, showing its incompleteness.

It was the intense conviction and appreciation of the Messianic manifestation on the part of the disciples which broad-

ened and enlarged the field of Messianic intimations and anticipations in the past.

Then again, the keen sense of the reality of spiritual truth as distinct from the Old, and yet related to it, gives a freedom of thought and breadth of conception in treating of the merging of the physical past in the spiritual present and future. The thought of any conflict between the temporal characteristics of preceding revelation and the spiritual fulfillment in point of reality never disturbed the sacred writers. The more the spirit abounded, the more overwhelming seemed the fulfillment of the past. Thence past history, past institutions, the past in its totality, is treated of not only as true, but as truth far transcending the conceptions of those who came in original connection with it as inspired authors and actors. It was the fulness of thought and freedom of spirit begotten by the revelation of Christ which give the breadth and scope that attach to their Messianic references, and yet which, at the same time, limits them, since it was not the re-establishment of the Old, but the proclamation of the New, which was the work assigned them.